

Lance lands in outer space

Performance in gory epic was a vital breakthrough for young Californian

WHEN American director Nick Castle was preparing to cast the movie *The Last Starfighter* the first name he jotted down for the leading role was Lance Guest, a 23-year-old actor from Saratoga, California.

Had Castle not seen his very brief performance in the blood and gore epic *Halloween II*, handsome young Guest might not have become the star that he is today.

In the eyes of the director, Lance Guest had the right qualities — a kind of innocence, shyness and determination — for *The Last Starfighter*'s pivotal character, Alex Rogan.

Alex, a teenager from a remote trailer park, displays an extraordinary talent for video game wizardry. So much so, that he is suddenly whisked away into outer space by an unscrupulous alien scallywag (Robert Preston) to help fight an inter-galactic war to save the universe.

The Last Starfighter, which also stars Catherine Mary Stewart (from TV's *The Days Of Our Lives*) and veteran character actor Dan O'Herlihy (as a lizard-faced alien), is now screening nationally in Greater Union Theatres.

"When I first read the script, I felt an immediate connection with Alex's character — and from an actor's point of view, that's a valuable asset to have," Lance told TV WEEK from Canada, where he is filming a television drama special.

"But doing the movie was very hard work. It was very cold at night up in the mountains at California's Soledad Canyon.

"What I enjoyed most was not having to sit around for hours on end, because I was in every scene."

In *The Last Starfighter*, Lance Guest got to play dual roles within the same scene. As well as Alex, he had to play his substitute robot double that covers for him during his absence from Earth. Guest acquitted himself well.

The Last Starfighter is rollicking family fare. It is fast-paced, action-packed and brimful with humor. A lot of the comedy generates from its vast



assortment of aliens in all shapes and sizes.

According to Lance, the movie was favorably received by most American film critics.

"Fortunately, they said they were pleasantly surprised," he said.

Working with such silver-screen stalwarts as Robert Preston and Dan O'Herlihy was a bonus for Lance. He said he learned a lot about his craft from the two Oscar nominees.

"Robert Preston was a real easy-going professional, forever spinning stories and jokes about his years in the movies."

● Californian Lance Guest as Alex Rogan in *The Last Starfighter*.

The youngest child in a family of four, Lance began taking an interest in acting when he was in ninth grade at school.

"We had a local theatre in town and I would go there regularly. Sometimes I would sneak in, other times I worked as an usher," he said.

"During high school I was either acting, rehearsing or picking up some outside training. I never thought of it as a possible profession."

Garry Shelley